

Which Gospel is Authentic

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[0 : 00] That was just cool. Amen. Radical. Authentic. How about that?

Take out your Bibles with me, please, and turn to the first epistle of John. You'll find it all the way at the back of your Bible. If you get to Revelation, turn left.

You'll see Jude, and then you'll see 3 John, then 2 John, then 1 John. That's where you want to be, 1 John. Almost at the end. We did an overview last week to kind of look at what we're in for for the next three years or however long we're here.

Three months. I don't know what it'll be. We'll take one verse at a time. Well, we're taking four today. Look at that. We see that John, he tells us at the very end that he's writing to us who believe. So that we may know that we truly have eternal life. So he's answering that question. How do I know?

[1 : 09] How do I know I truly have eternal life? How do I know that the faith I have is that living faith? The hope I have is that living hope.

How do I know? All right, so that's what his book's about. Here in the opening verses, in verses 1 through 4, chapter 1, he gives his prologue. And it's a little bit awkward language, but he is writing very intentionally to reaffirm what is really, really significant.

In fact, what he's banking on as the gospel. What is it? Because we know later in the book, he's going to deal with deceivers and antichrists and those who deny not only Jesus, but the gospel. So with that, these verses are important. So if you're able, please stand as I read from 1 John 1, verses 1 through 4. That which was from the beginning, which we have heard, which we have seen with our eyes, which we have looked upon and touched with our hands concerning the word of life. The life was made manifest, and we have seen it and testify to it and proclaim to you the eternal life, which was with the Father and was made manifest to us.

[2 : 51] That which we have seen and heard, we proclaim also to you so that you too may have fellowship with us and indeed, our fellowship is with the Father and with His Son, Jesus Christ.

And we are writing these things so that our joy may be complete. So he reads, so he writes, so we read.

Let us pray. Father, grant us your spirit, Lord, to give us illumination as we walk through these words, these crucial words of John, these deliberate, intentional, reaffirming, clarifying words. May we see not only what he sees as so critical, but why they're so critical and how, Lord, it relates to us. We pray this in Jesus' name.

Amen. Amen. Please be seated. I came across this story.

[4 : 05] I always come across these stories. Interesting. There was a woman that was pulled over for speeding. She's an older woman, and so she's pulled over, and she says, is there a problem, officer?

Ma'am, you were speeding. Oh, I see. Can I see your license, please? She said, I'd give it to you, but I don't have one. Don't have one?

Lost it four years ago for drunk driving. Oh, I see. Can I see your vehicle registration papers, please? I can't do that.

Why not? I stole this car. Stole it? Yes, and I killed and hacked up the owner. You what? His body parts are in plastic bags in the trunk, if you want to see. The officer looks at the woman and slowly backs away to his car, calls for backup.

Within five minutes, five police cars circle the car. The senior officer slowly approaches the car, clasping his half-drawn gun. Ma'am, could you step out of your vehicle, please?

[5 : 17] The woman steps out of her vehicle. Is there a problem, sir? One of my officers told me that you have stolen this car and murdered the owner. Murdered the owner?

Yes, could you please open the trunk of your car? The woman opens the trunk, revealing nothing but an empty trunk. Is this your car, ma'am? Yes, here are the registration papers.

The officer's quite stunned. One of my officers claimed that you did not have a driver's license. The woman digs into her handbag, pulls out a clutch, out of a clutch purse and hands it to the officer. The officer examines the license and is quite puzzled. Ma'am, one of my officers told me that you didn't have a license, that you stole the car, that you murdered and hacked up the owner and put him in the trunk.

The woman said, I bet the liar told you I was speeding, too. Lies, lies, lies.

[6 : 25] Deception. Deception. Distorting what really happened. It's happening in churches today. It's happening with popular preachers today.

Okay. The early creeds. I forgot to bring a hymnal. I was going to show you something. The back of our hymnal, I think it's around number 714, is that 716?

We have some affirmations of faith in the back of our hymnal. Oops, past that, after that. Where is it?

Where is 714? Doesn't go that far. It was... 716. 716.

Yes. There it is. There it is. It doesn't have a page number. It's after the psalm readings.

[7 : 32] It's before indexes. Anyway. Don't worry about it. We have affirmations. There's the Apostles' Creed, which we know was put together.

We don't have it all together, but we know it was developed during the first and second centuries. The Nicene Creed is one that was documented in 325 AD. Okay.

This is what the early church thought about God, Jesus, the gospel. Okay. False teachers and liberal scholars will tell you that the Christianity was made up in the 5th, 6th, 7th centuries.

We have in 325 AD documented development of the theology of Jesus Christ already. Not something later developed.

And of course, we talked about last week that the documents of 1 John, the documents of John the apostle, were quite well known and established. And even we have fragments that are priceless old.

[8 : 39] So, but here, I want you to see what the Nicene Creed said about Jesus as early as 325 AD. They're clarifying who Jesus is.

They're affirming and defining who this Jesus is. And they say, okay, they say, I believe in one God, the Father Almighty, maker of heaven and earth, and of all things visible and invisible.

And I believe in one Lord Jesus Christ. Who is he? The only begotten son of God, begotten of his father before all worlds, God of God, light of light, very God of very God, begotten not made, begotten not made, 325 AD, defining that, being of one substance with the Father, by whom all things were made, who for us men and for our salvation came down from heaven, was incarnate by the Holy Spirit of the Virgin Mary, and was made man, and crucified also for us under Pontius Pilate, a historical person.

He suffered and was buried, and on the third day he rose again, according to the scriptures, and ascended into heaven, and sitting at the right hand of the Father. And he shall come again with glory to judge both the quick and the dead, whose kingdom shall have no end.

And then they go on to talk about they believe in the Holy Spirit, et cetera, and how the Holy Spirit relates to these things. These were debates and difficulties during the first three centuries that by the beginning of the third century is defined with quite precision.

[10 : 20] And we can see why John begins the way he does. Even in the early years after Jesus, there were many divergent ideas that were cropping up.

The church gathered when this happened and gathered together and reaffirmed and confirmed and clarified who Jesus was. Was he a God?

Was he the God? Was he Son of God? How does he relate to the Father? How does he relate to the Spirit? All these things were being worked out. And they would go back to the apostolic writings and clarify those things.

So it's no different today. There are many false teachers, false preachers, some of them quite popular, best-selling authors, programs on TV every week who distort the gospel, who claim authority, yet what they teach is not at all the gospel.

They have a partial gospel. So, John, in these first three verses, is reaffirming, clarifying, defining the origin and the identity of the true gospel, the authentic gospel.

[11 : 59] What's the original? What is it that others distorted? Why is this important? Because there's always a false, deceptive gospel around.

At the end of the first century, this is John's concern. We saw last week in the overview, I showed you chapter 2, 18 through 26, where he's talking about certain antichrists who have arisen. Not the antichrist who's to come, but little a, antichrists, many who have already come who are truly antichrist. They're antichrist.

They're antichrist. He's not the Messiah, they claim, or he's not the son of God, or that he actually did not take on a body. So, that's why in chapter 4 of 1 John, he talks about, this is how you tell the spirit of error and the spirit of truth.

How do we know which spirit is from God? Every spirit that says Jesus did not come in the flesh is satanic.

[13 : 06] So, Jesus taking a body is absolutely essential to the gospel. There are people today who say, that doesn't matter, it's just the idea that matters.

It's the spirit of it. But they were saying that then, and John's dealing with that. He's saying, no, that's a lie. So, this is why it's important.

And if Jesus did not, if God the Son did not become flesh and become truly a true man, then his death has no value.

And if he was not a holy man, if there was not a virgin birth, where the Holy Spirit overshadowed Mary so that the child might be a holy child, an innocent, truly innocent, not taking sin nature in, someone truly like Adam, who then lived a righteous life according to the law, who fulfilled the law, then he becomes a perfect sacrifice for sinners.

If he was not a man, we have no Savior. We have no sacrifice. We have no payment for our sin.

[14 : 32] We're left to ourselves. And how are we going to do with that? How'd the Jews do with that? Do they keep the law? Read the Old Testament.

They can never keep the law. The law is to show our sin. So, today there's many false gospels. There are some that deny the uniqueness of Jesus, deny that he's the Son of God, or deny that he is God, deny that he was holy. Of course, the Jews deny that he was Messiah.

We have the Mormons who have a different view of Jesus, the Jehovah's Witnesses, Christian signs, on and on. Deny the uniqueness of Christ. They will talk about a Christ, they will talk about a Jesus who was a God.

First time I met a Jehovah's Witness, I'm like, what Bible are you reading? Oh, they have their own. Oh. Who translated that?

[15 : 30] Whoa. Okay. I got one that goes back a lot further. So, you always have that. Then you have others.

There's some who deny Jesus himself. There are others that deny the purpose of the gospel. And that's where many of our false preachers fit in. They will say, yes, the historical Jesus.

They will say, yes, he's our Savior from our sin. Yes, yes, yes. But we're saved from sin, but we're saved to what? And a prosperity gospel will say, well, you're saved from poverty to riches.

You're saved from sickness to health. Jesus wants you healthy. They even claim that Paul in 2 Corinthians 12, he said he had thorn in the flesh, messenger of Satan, right?

That stays with you. They will say, I've heard them say, Paul didn't have enough faith. You mean when he heard directly from God that said, no, my grace is sufficient for you.

[16 : 29] You know, you're good, Paul. My power's perfected anyway. You mean that was wrong? Paul should have disregarded God's direct revelation to him about his thorn and said, no, I believe better than that.

Is that what he's supposed to say? That's what they say. What's the purpose of the gospel? Save us from poverty, sickness, and weakness?

How you doing? Are you all rich and super healthy? By the way, if this theology were correct that God wants our health, we should never die.

Apparently, he didn't have enough faith. Made it to 107, but then he failed. Come on, this is ridiculous. Okay. So, that's an issue today.

So, both of those are issued today. So, what we're going to do today is look at what John writes here in these first three verses, four verses, that talk about the true authentic gospel.

[17 : 40] What he's going to define and identify are two things. In verses one and two, he's going to identify that message, that word that he preaches, that he testifies about, that he banks everything

on.

He's going to talk about what that word is, and he's going to quite deliberate, elaborate explanation to define it. Okay, and then in verse three, he's going to say, so what's the purpose of that message?

Why do we proclaim that message? Why is that message so important? What's its purpose? And so, in verse three and four, we have the purpose of the gospel. So, that's what he's going to show us today.

So, so part one, verses one and two, what's the, what's the message that he's reaffirming and clarifying? John identifies what he calls the word of life, and then he calls it the eternal life, the life. And he declares that this word of life, this eternal word of life, is identical with the historical Jesus. [18:54] So, how do you put all that in one line? The eternal word of life is identical with the historical Jesus. The word that was from the beginning, that was with the Father, the word that was manifested, is a person, which is Jesus Christ, who became flesh, was seen, and handled, and heard, and witnessed from birth to death, to resurrection.

That's the message. Jesus is the message. He is indistinguishable from the gospel. Jesus is the gospel.

And so we have to, which Jesus? Oh, just, you know, Jesus. Jesus. Yeshua.

So, who is this Jesus? Well, my Jesus is this. I don't care who your Jesus is. Who is the Jesus? Okay?

So, that's what he's going to define. So, notice the process here in verses 1 and 2. He talks about how this word was revealed, or manifested. This word then was also eyewitnessed and testified to. [20:15] And then it was proclaimed. So, it's kind of a process. So, the word, which was from the beginning, is now manifested. We beheld, we saw, we witnessed, and then we proclaimed that which we saw to others.

Okay? So, three parts. It's revealed. Notice what's revealed. He says in verse 1, that which was from the beginning. It doesn't say what that is. What's that? That which was from the beginning. And then he talks about we've heard it, we've seen with our eyes, we've looked on, touched with our hands, concerning the word of life. Okay, that's back to what was from the beginning. What was from the beginning is the word of life.

Verse 2, the life was manifested, revealed, and we've seen it, testify it, and proclaim it to you. Claim to you what? What's the message? The message is that which was from the beginning.

The message is the word of life. The message is, verse 2, we testify and proclaim to you the eternal life, which was further clarified as that which is from the Father.

[21:18] That which is with the Father. That which, literally, that which is facing the Father. That which is right beside the Father. Interesting. Not just with, but toward the Father.

Facing the Father. With. One with the Father. We can understand from other texts. So, he defines this message as something from the beginning, something that is a word about life, a message about life, a life that is eternal, and a life that is beside the Father, with the Father.

It is a message that is manifested. The word manifest means visible. The invisible became visible. The eternal became flesh. The absolute became limited.

As Paul talks about, he emptied himself, right? By taking flesh. Becoming a man. Does he stop being God?

[22:40] No. How's the hymn go? Veiled in flesh. The Godhead seed. Right? So, this is the message.

And so, how do we know? This word, this eternal, is a person, because he emphasizes, now it was witnessed. It was eyewitnessed.

Look what he goes through. That was from the beginning, which we have heard. So, it's audible. We've heard it. Okay? Well, okay, yeah, I hear things that might be in my head.

How do you know if that's real? Which we have seen with our eyes. Oh, okay, so now it's not just heard. Now it's visible. Now I can see with my eyes.

Now, what if I'm seeing, you know, a vision? So, you know, that's not enough. Hear and see. Okay, I see with my eyes. Okay, but maybe I got cataracts.

[23:38] Oh, Mark's not here. I can't give him that time. And I do. Never mind. But it was a visible, visible, tangible we saw with our eyes. We looked upon.

This word looked upon means that it's not just the same that they're seeing with their eyes, but seeing the significance. So, in other words, when Peter, James, and John went up on the mountain with Jesus and he was transfigured before them, what did they see?

They saw Jesus all of a sudden bright white. Yeah, I saw that.

Yeah, no big deal. No, they beheld it. They looked upon it. They're like, what? And Peter couldn't contain himself, right? Lord, let me make some tents and, you know, I'm going to do something.

This is cool. I think that's what he said. He said, cool, didn't he? So, they beheld, right? They're grasping some significance. When they saw him calm the sea with a word, what did they do?

[24 : 40] Oh, yeah, I saw that. No, they were on their face in the bottom of the boat, right? Who is this? Right? This, this is no mirror.

Man, they're grasping something. And then he says, touched with our hands. Okay, so it's not a spirit. He's, he's, he's touchable.

He's physical. He's flesh. We touched him. Remember in the upper room, doubting Thomas, unless I see with my eyes and touch with my hands.

And Jesus pops in, right? It's suddenly visible in the upper room. After his resurrection, he says, Tommy, Tommy, come over here. Right there, buddy.

No, actually, it will be right there. Touch that. See that I am flesh and bone. Now, it's a raised body. It's flesh and bone.

[25 : 37] It's a body. Touchable. There, sign, where the, where the soldier pierced me. Touch. blessed are you who see now, but blessed more are those who do not see and believe your testimony.

We touched. He was real. He was flesh and blood. He's not some myth made up in the fourth, fifth, sixth century. He was a real historical person.

Writers who are not believers, historians of the first century talk about Jesus. It's not him. He's a real person who lived and died and was raised.

Josephus even says he was raised. Oh, I don't trust Josephus. Fine. Who's the other one? I forget. Pliny. Philo. Philo. He's a historical person. What John is trying to say, he's a, clarify beyond doubt.

[26 : 56] This is not a myth. This is not a spirit. This is not made up later. This is a real person. And this real person was the eternal from beginning, from the father who came and was, and appeared, became visible that we could see and hear and touch.

In Acts chapter one, between the time of Jesus's resurrection and Pentecost, the disciples came together.

They studied the scripture. Remember, they lost Judas, right? Judas left, betrayed, and then killed himself. So he was one of the original 12. Well, they got, they got one, we got an open spot.

How are we going to replace Judas? So they read the scriptures. They prayed. They drew lots or the cast lots. Okay.

But they were praying, studying scripture. And they, here was the criteria. They said in Acts one, one of the men who have accompanied us from during all the time that the Lord Jesus went out in and out among us, beginning from the baptism of John until the day when he was taken up from us.

[28 : 13] One of these men must become with us a witness to his resurrection. So what's the criteria? How do we replace Judas? Well, it has to be somebody who's been there from the beginning all the way through the resurrection.

He was there at the baptism of John when John said, this is him. All through his life, death, resurrection. It has to be somebody who's an eyewitness.

Jesus appointed people. Mark three talks about Jesus appointed 12, right? He had all these disciples. He goes up on the mountain and prays all night, comes down and says, okay, these are the 12.

And the purpose I'm appointing you to be apostles, sent ones is that you might be with me. And I might send you out to preach.

You're to be with me. You're to watch me. You're to witness. You're to verify who I am. See, so for John, this is absolutely critical. Eyewitness.

[29 : 16] And remember, this is written at the end of the first century. So John's probably the last eyewitness, at least apostle eyewitness.

And all these rumors are going around. He says, I was there. Oh no, he's real. Yeah, he did what, yeah, he did all that. Well, I wrote the whole gospel back 10 years ago in the 80s.

The original 80s. Now I'm writing to you in the 90s with a clarification. Wrote the gospel so that you might believe that he's the Messiah.

Have life in his name. Now I'm writing to the believers. They might know you have the real life.

Right? And the real life is in this Jesus. So it was revealed.

It's eyewitness. Now it's proclaimed. These guys didn't keep it to themselves. God becomes flesh in the person of Jesus. They see him, walk with him, touch him, eat with him, listen to him, absorb from him.

[30 : 24] Now they proclaim it. They don't keep it to themselves. They testify to others. When you go into court, you are a, and you're called onto the stand.

What are you? You're a witness. Are you witnessing to Jesus? What's witness? See, if you grew up in church like me, and you hear they're witnessing on a stand, like, oh, are they telling about Jesus? That's the only way I knew what witness was. No, witness is actually somebody who tells what they have experienced. You can't tell secondhand stuff. You have to tell firsthand. What did you see?

What did you hear? What did you experience? That's the only relevant thing you can testify to. So John says, we testified. We heard, we saw, we touched, we saw, we proclaim, we testify.

And they didn't just testify, but they proclaim, they announce, they report what they witness. And what John emphasizes here in these first two verses is not what he did, but who that message is.

[31 : 28] It's the what was from the beginning. What was with the Father? What we saw, what we heard, what we touched, what we, et cetera. What, what, what, what?

That's the emphasis. The what is a who. The what is a who. This eternal life is actually Jesus Christ.

So when you read the, the opening to the gospel of John, John chapter one, you can't tell me it's a different author. He has the same words.

He has the same kind of focus. The other gospels, Matthew, Mark, and Luke, they go to, right, they start in Nazareth, right?

They start in, they start with John the Baptist. They start, you know, the beginning of Jesus's ministry. John, when he writes his, his, his gospel 20, 25 years later after the other guys, he's filling in a bunch of gaps.

[32 : 32] And he starts a little sooner than, than Nazareth. So he writes, he says, in the beginning was the word.

And the word was with God. And the word was God. He, notice that, not it, he, a person, he, the word, was in the beginning with God.

All things were made through him. And without him was not anything made that was made. Oh, I guess he was there.

I, I guess he's the creator. Father speaks the word, acts. And in him was life.

And the life was the light of men. Life. So we see word, life, word of life. Verse 14. And that word that was from the beginning that was with God and there was God, the word became flesh and dwelt among us and we have seen in his glory.

[33 : 43] There it is again. We see. He was manifested. He became flesh. He became visible. He became touchable. And we saw. We were eyewitnesses of his glory.

Glory is of the only son from the father. Not just any glory, but the only son from the father. The one and only. The only begotten. Full of grace and truth.

In other words, he was authentic. He was real. He ends his prologue in the gospel of John 1, 18. No one has ever seen God. As a Jew, John, nobody sees God.

Really. God even told Moses, right? You can't see me and live. I'll show you, you know, I'll go by and I'll hold your hand. So John's affirming an Old Testament truth.

No one's ever seen God, really seen God. And John says, the only God who is at the father's side, he's made him known.

[34 : 50] When he became flesh, when he dwelt among us, we beheld his glory. We beheld the glory of the almighty God. Now, it's veiled in flesh. Granted. We don't have all the light that kills us.

You know, that's why in the revelation when John sees Jesus in his glory, he's a dead man, dead man, dead man. So, the point is, Jesus is the gospel.

Not just any Jesus. The Jesus who was from the beginning, the eternal, historical son of God.

Jesus. The invisible who became visible, who took on flesh, who lived a righteous life according to the law, as a true man with all the limitations of humanity, and then died as a substitute, a holy,

perfect lamb without blemish.

blemish. Oh, he was blemished on the outside, but not blemished on the inside. That he might truly take our place.

Truly carry our debt. Truly the certificate, right, of our debt is nailed to the cross and it's canceled, forgiven, wiped out, erased.

[36 : 18] There's no other true authentic gospel. Christ alone is able to save and empower and give the Holy Spirit. An idea can't do that. A spirit can't do that.

A God who becomes flesh alone can do that. Solus Christus and Christ alone. Christ alone, nothing else.

So, that's true of the message. It's also true of the purpose of the message. So, why are we saved? What is God's purpose in sending his son into the world? Right, John 3, 16.

God so loved the world that he sent his only begotten son. Right, why? that whoever believes in him shall not perish but have eternal life.

Okay, so he gives us eternal life. He sent his son to give us eternal life. We're saved from what? We're saved from our sin, our debt, our guilt, our shame, our past, our rebellion.

[37 : 28] All that stuff wrapped up into who we are, right? Our wandering from him, our rejecting him, our dismissing him. We're saved from all of that. Why?

We're saved from all of that to what? to your best life now. Right? That's what Joel says.

J-O, your best life now, buddy. How do you keep a smile on your face all the time? Well, it's true. Jesus came to give us abundant life. He wasn't talking about earthly. Jesus says, you're going to follow me, what are you going to do?

You're going to deny yourself, take up your cross, and follow me. Joel says, well, he doesn't misquote it this way, but what he is saying by your best life now is, to follow Jesus means to promote yourself, to lay down your cross, and follow my desires, follow my greed, my covetousness, because I want to be rich, and I want to be healthy, and I want it to be all about me.

[38 : 51] Because God owns the cattle on a thousand hills, so, so should I. Right?

This is what's being preached. It's preached up on the hill, this is preached on TV, not just Joel, but Marilyn Hickey, and all these other folks, they all have this, it's about you.

It's not the gospel, it's not the purpose of the gospel. They don't deny Jesus, but they deny, they distort why Jesus came, what we're saved to.

Well, I'm saved from, now I'm free. What did Paul say? Shall we sin, so that grace might increase? Yeah, God's going to forgive me, yeah, yeah, God's going to forgive you, but that's not why you were given grace, so that you can go sin more.

By no means. By no means. Why cheapen what he has done? No, because if I'm really saved, well, we're going to see what that really looks like in 1 John.

[40 : 02] If I'm really saved, what do I really want to do? We sang of it in the hymns today. What I really want is I want to follow him, I want to live like him, his commandments are no longer, oh, because he's changed me, now I see the wisdom of his commandments and I want to do them.

Not because I have to. I have to earn something. Because I love him. That's why Peter couldn't figure out how he would ever deny Jesus.

Lord, I love you, I'd do anything for you, I'll lay down my life for you. Oh, here comes 600 soldiers. I got them, Jesus. Stand behind me, I got them. That wasn't a, it was a machaira, okay, it's 20 inches, it's a real sword.

Who's first? Poor little Marcus. Wham! Who's next? Peter. You're going to deny me.

What are you talking about? I'm the most loyal, faithful, I'm your biggest fan. I love you so much, Jesus. I know you do.

[41 : 23] But you're a little too confident in yourself. A little too, you trust yourself a little bit too much there, Peter. Well, a lot too much.

We're going to fix that. It ain't going to be a Roman soldier. It's going to be, it's going to be a little servant girl. Didn't see that coming.

All right, so why are we, I've got the second point. Why are we saved? We're saved to fellowship with God. That's what he said in verse three. What is all this message that we testify about, we proclaim to you?

Why do we proclaim it? Verse three. What is this message about? What is God's purpose for sending his son, for him being flesh and living and dying and rising from the dead?

What's the purpose? This, which we have seen and heard, we proclaim to you. Why? so that you too may have fellowship with us and indeed our fellowship is with the Father and with his son, Jesus Christ.

[42 : 37] He'll get to the spirit in a chapter here. He's not leaving the spirit out of that. This is where they started. See, the purpose is true fellowship with God.

True fellowship with others and true fellowship with God. It's all wrapped up into one package. It's two kinds of fellowship, but it's fellowship with the original eyewitnesses and with every believer in Christ, but ultimately what makes that fellowship true is fellowship with God.

The purpose is true fellowship with God that is created only in the historical Jesus. It's not fellowship because we share a meal together.

That's fellowship. We're sharing a meal. Fellowship means commonness. We share a meal in common. That's fellowship. But John's not talking about that kind of fellowship. He's talking about something much bigger. Something we share that not everybody shares.

With Father and Son and those who've laid down their lives for Him. So two purposes really that are the same. The death of Christ, the message of Christ, the gospel of Christ creates community, a body, first of all, that you may have fellowship with us.

[43 : 55] You may have something in common. Fellowship simply means something in common. We have commonness. So we have a partnership. Right? You can't be unequally yoked, right?

There's no fellowship between the unbeliever and the believer. Now, you can have earthly fellowship where you can eat a meal together. But you don't have commonness of who God is and who Christ is and what your life is, what your purpose of life is.

And I say, it's common. Close association. With who? With us, he says. With us. In Christ, we share grace in common with other believers. And I think he's talking about, you know, you share in common with us John the Apostle and Peter and James and Andrew and Thomas and Bartholomew and Nathaniel.

Not Judas. you share what they had, what they saw, what they heard, what they touched. Now, I don't get the touch, but I get it.

Jesus said, right, Thomas? You believe because you saw, but blessed are those who believe and didn't get the touch. Blessed are those that believe your testimony.

[45 : 21] Okay. So we're joined, we have, we as a body, that's why body life is so important. That's why community is so important. Jesus did not come just to die and give me freedom so I can go live my life.

He died so that I can know him and his body. He puts me into a body. He puts me into a community and that community is vital for me.

That's where I serve. That's where I love. That's where I bear one another's burdens. That's, that's where I cry out and, and others comfort me. That's where I'm strengthened.

That's where I'm affirmed. I, I love singing today with, with everybody. Yet not. I, I mean, that was, did it get louder? Or is that just me?

I got, Mark got loud. I know that was, you know, it's great to hear that sing. I mean, what does that, you can't experience that. I know some folks have to watch, they can't physically come, but, if you can physically come and you're a believer in Jesus Christ, be here.

[46 : 35] Period. That's not a guilt, that's not, that's just, please, for your good. And, oh, the separation, this time of separation last few years is, we've lost people.

And when, when you stop coming, you get used to not coming, I think. Huh? Oh, I can watch it anytime. I, I know, I always have my, my, my phone on and I, I want to see how many, how many are watching live.

Not very many. In the week, there'll be 20, 30, whatever. But, and that's not critical. It's a great convenience that if somebody has to miss, they could still be part.

and, but this is what John's talking about, this community, this community, this one another. I can't do that online. Even when we Zoom, how's, how's Zoom go, right?

Yeah. Uh, Roger fixes us up with that, but, but, you know, it's not to say, thank God we can have that, that, I'm not criticizing that.

[47 : 49] So, also, there's a second kind of fellowship, not only with us, but our fellowship, John says. So, if you have fellowship with, with us, with John, with the apostles, with every believer in Christ, the fellowship that John has is with the Father and the Son.

So, you enter into fellowship with John, you also enter into fellowship with the Father and the Son. And, uh, that's why Jesus came. Not just to save us from sin and debt, but, not to save us from poverty, not, not to free us to do whatever we want.

He saves us, so that we might have relationship, with Father and Son. and, and actually an authentic relationship with others that I, that I used to hide from.

Right? I, I, I can say truth about myself and live on, honestly and authentically because my brothers and sisters are going to, going to have compassion upon me.

They're going to, they're going to forgive me. They're going to, they're going to hold me up. They're going to, they're going to say, I've been there to, I get it. Come on.

[49 : 01] right? That's, um, but we have relationship with Father and Son, a personal relationship.

Do you know what that is? I know some of you know, some of you know very well what that is. I walk and I talk with Jesus. I talk to the Father, and I talk to the Son, and I talk to the Holy Spirit. Jesus walks with me every moment of the day, and the Holy Spirit brings things, you know, Holy Spirit's doing this, right? Love you. You'll be all right.

Come on. Come on. Not, get back in line. That's Satan. Come on.

There's comfort here. There's grace here. Come on. You know how Jesus is. You know how Jesus is. He's gentle. He's not going to break over a bent reed.

[50 : 07] Oh, you're bent over. You're, you're, you're hurting. You've been, you've failed him so much. He's not going to break a bent reed. Come, hold you up.

Peter, you're going to fail me, right? You're going to deny me. Satan's demanded permission to sift you like wheat. I want you to know, brother, I prayed for you. Oh, so that I won't fail?

No. No, you need to fail. And I prayed for you that, that when you recover, then you can strengthen your brothers.

And you can't strengthen your brothers until you fail, until you see your weakness, until you see you can't trust yourself. Then you can help your brothers not say, be strong in yourself. You say, lean on Jesus every moment.

I can tell you, I thought I was strong. I'm not strong. I can't trust. I make promises, but I'm a promise breaker. I wish I was a promise keeper.

[51 : 18] I wanted to be a promise keeper. I signed up to be a promise keeper even. Cause that sound great. I mean, that was an awesome motivation. But it set me up to fail.

That wasn't the intention. I get it. I know that. There's only one promise keeper. Peter will tell you that, right? Peter won't sign up for promise keepers. Not as a critic.

He just, no, I know I won't keep mine. I better not. You guys, you guys are better than me, so you do it. Is promise keeper still around?

Yeah. Okay. I hope they, I hope they've recognized some of that stuff. Well, meaning. Well, well, true Christian people. bad method.

We come up with methods, don't we? That'll help us be faithful. Well, I want to be more faithful. That appealed to every genuine Christian. I want to be more faithful.

[52 : 23] That's great. All right. I'm sorry. I wasn't here to do that. So finally, he says in verse four, that he's writing the purpose of the gospel is fellowship with one another, and then fellowship with God, the father.

And finally, he says, we're writing these things. We're writing all of this, this message, this purpose. We're writing all of this so that our joy may be complete. That our joy. When you share Christ and it's received by others, that produces in you a joy, a complete joy.

It's one thing I get joy. So if I receive the gospel, I will get joy, right? I enter into the kingdom. The kingdom is righteousness, peace, and joy in the Holy Spirit.

So I get peace, joy, right. I get all of that in the gospel. John's talking about a different level of joy. He's saying, when I preach all this to you and you receive it, I'm writing this.

So that my joy, you'll get joy. Don't worry. My joy, our joy, our apostolic joy, our preacher joy.

[53 : 34] When you receive it, you know how that fills me with joy. You see people come to you. You see those little eyes of good news.

You see them. That's Jesus. You see some of that. What does that do? That. Oh, yes. Right? You hear of someone that through your testimony, through your whatever, oh, that led you to Christ? What I shared with you? Really? Oh, that was huge. I didn't think people like that could be okay. Okay. That brings joy.

That's what John, that's what fills John with joy is, is what others share in the eternal life and fellowship. So, I want to look at one more thing before we close off here.

What's true Christian fellowship? How is it created and how does it look? Interesting, as I was tracing the word through scripture, it came up in Peter's sermon at Pentecost, Acts chapter two.

[54 : 46] Remember Pentecost, the Holy Spirit comes, there's tongues of fire, and they're speaking in other languages. All this stuff going on, and all of a sudden they're hearing the gospel in their own native tongues, right?

And so people say, oh, they're drunk, they're drunk. They're not, you know, the people that knew the apostles, they're not, they don't speak, I don't know, some other language at the time.

Parthenian? How's Peter speaking Parthenian? They're drunk. And so Peter gets up and says, no, they're not drunk. It's a fulfillment of Joel chapter two.

That God will pour, in the last days, God will pour out his spirit and will speak in other tongues. And whoever believes will be saved. And so Peter preaches this sermon.

He preaches the gospel. He tells about Christ. He talks about the life of Jesus, the death of Jesus, and the resurrection, and how they're witnesses of the resurrection. At the end of the sermon, Peter says this, Acts 2, 36.

[55 : 47] He says, let all Israel know. Let all the, he's speaking to the Jews. This is a huge Jewish crowd, probably a million people. Let all the house of Israel, therefore know for certain that God has made him, Jesus, both Lord and Christ, both Yahweh and Mashiach.

This Jesus whom, ooh, you crucified. This Jesus whom you, you Jews, crucified.

Remember you stood before Pilate and said, crucify him, crucify him, you crucified him. So when they heard this, they were cut to the heart, convicted, and said to Peter and the rest of the apostles, brothers, what shall we do?

Talk about an altar call. The people do the altar, what do we do? That's the kind of altar call you want. What do we do?

Peter said, repent and be baptized, every one of you, in the name of Jesus Christ, for the forgiveness of your sins.

[56 : 58] And you will receive the gift of the Holy Spirit, the same one that was poured out on us, be poured out on you. For the promise is for you and your children, for all who are far off and everyone whom the Lord, our God calls to himself.

And with many other words, boy, he didn't end his sermon right there. Many other words, he bore witness and continued to exhort them, saying, save yourselves from this crooked generation. Watch this, here's the result.

Those who received his word were baptized. And there were added that day about 3,000 souls. 3,000. 3,000.

They estimate by, at that Passover, that in Jerusalem that year, there were some, was it half a million lambs?

So they estimate some 3 million Jews were there. So 3,000 sounds like a lot, but three, percentage-wise, few.

[58 : 00] Anyway, but 3,000 were added that day. More than Jesus ever did, right? So what did they do? They received his word, and then they did what?

They devoted themselves to the apostles' teaching and to the fellowship. Notice it's called the fellowship. Not just to fellowship, but to the fellowship, comma, to the breaking of bread and to the prayers.

I think that's the definition of the fellowship. The fellowship, which encompasses, which involves the breaking of bread, the communion, and the prayers. They're united.

What they have in common is the bread of Christ and the prayers together, supporting one another. And all came upon every soul, and many wonders and signs were being done through the apostles. And all who believed were together and had all things in fellowship, had all things in common. Why? Because it's not about themselves. It's no longer about me.

[59 : 03] What I have is yours. What you have is mine. No. You got a need? I got it. If I got it, you got it. That's common.

Wait a minute. Does that go into my bank account too? That goes into my position. Wait a minute. What? I don't want to be in a commune. Not a commune.

